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Black Heart

[nachtmaredoll](#)

Summary:

“Hahaha, you think a toy gun makes you hot shit?”

“You think this is a toy?” Masato’s voice was strained.

She gasped as she heard the gun go off just as the crowd mere meters away from them yelled “ichi” in their New Years countdown—what a bad luck inspiring start.

—

“Any wishes for the New Year?” Aoki’s voice and breath were at her ear; “Don’t say it out loud, or it won’t come true.”

“Go! Yon! San! Ni!” I wish for this year to be a good one. I wish to be happy—

“Ichi!” Her eyes flew open as she felt a soft pair of lips kiss her cheek just as the countdown reached one.

Notes:

- For [Nishikisbelt \(Ela_san\)](#), [Kuewnasi](#), [CryingCow](#).

To my Chairman and my two kyodai that had spent many an hour listening to me rant or rattle off RGG brain rot. Without them I'd never get anywhere. Love you all so very very much.

[Updated] Note 1: Fic title taken from the song "Black Heart" by Carly Rae Jepsen

Note 2: this is spawned from the legacies chapter in my one-shot collection fic. Not all things are the same, but there are similarities if you squint.

(See the end of the work for [more notes](#).)

Chapter 1

Notes:

There are some lines/dialogue taken from these two scenes in-game, I don't think I made them too exact, but just a note of warning.

Chapter Text

Kamurocho, Shinjuku

Tōkyō, Nihon

december 31/january 1

Ran was what most would call a "cabaret rat"—or, that's what a few of the hostess girls called her at least. She wasn't normally someone that the owners or managers of the clubs would allow in, as she's a minor, but her knowledge of the streets and best deals to buy gifts had garnered her favor with the hostesses and so she kept up a brisk business of running non-alcoholic errands for girls and their customers. It wasn't really a job that her mother approved of, and she was doubly sure that her father would also have something negative to say about it—if he knew she existed, that is—but it paid well and she never touched anything alcoholic.

New Years was sure to be busy, and she knew for a fact that one of the best hostesses in town, Yumeno, would be in high demand on a night like this, and so she had dressed in her nicest dress with a pair of leggings, cute ankle boots and a warm—but not bulky—jacket to run errands in. Yumeno was one of her best sources for a safe and easy night, as well as good tips. It was a cohesive relationship, really. Like a clownfish and a sea anemone: symbiosis? Maybe? *Whatever—not the point.*

The point was: tonight Yumeno would be busy, Ichiban and Masato would most definitely be in to visit—which meant extra safety in her case—and she'd get to see what Masato had bought

his girl for her birthday! She'd spent the last year or so, maybe two, watching Masato and Yumeno dance a line between hostess and patron to boyfriend and girlfriend, and she was counting down the days for Masato to ask Yumeno to move in together. In all honesty, she'd been expecting it back on Christmas, when Masato had gifted Yumeno a beautiful matching jewelry set. He *hadn't* asked then, of course, but she was just *sure* he would tonight.

And so, in support of her favorite couple—call her a hopeless romantic—she was dressed in black and a light pearlescent pink. She'd had to save up to buy the dress and jacket, of course, but it would definitely be worth it to see Masato smile.

Ran smiled as she slipped through the hostess club, invisible unless called upon—the girls all knew she was there—and made her way around to Masato's normal booth. She knew the man was there, as she'd heard Ichiban while running snacks out to another table, and she was happy to be invisible as she moved through the club because she wanted to see Masato's gift for Yumeno and not be hindered or called away and miss it.

Finding the booth, she smiled and ducked down to hide from Ichiban seeing her and making a ruckus—well, any *further* ruckus; the man was *loud*—and moved to perch just out of view of the small group but with a clear eyesight of Yumeno and Masato.

Getting comfortable, she settled in for the big reveal—giggling a little at Ichiban's antics—and smiled at Masato. He never really smiled, and to the casual observer he still wasn't, but the look on his face was so bright, excited and anticipatory that she was suddenly absolutely *sure* that he'd be asking Yumeno to move in with him.

"I'm just happy he's here." Yumeno's voice drifted out to her, and she suppressed a giggle. The woman was always happy whenever Masato was near, and Ran couldn't blame her. Despite him being so quiet and standoffish, Masato was incredibly smart, clever and even a bit mischievous—normally when messing with Ichiban—and she'd enjoyed the few times she'd been able to talk to him. He was knowledgeable and could discuss strategy, politics, and even law; back in October, she'd sat next to him and spent hours taking notes for a class assignment after he'd overheard her whine about not having help for it and being stuck. He was kind to her, as was Yumeno—and so she really wanted them to work out.

"I wish I had a boyfriend like Masato-san!" Another hostess' voice rang out, pulling her from her thoughts and she smiled as she moved from her hiding place to peek at the group. She couldn't see Ichiban's face with his back to her, but Masato and Yumeno were sitting side-by-side—and she was *absolutely positive* that she'd never seen Masato smile that softly or look that lovingly at his girlfriend before; it was cute! *Where is his wheelchair, though?*

She smiled as she watched Yumeno's face as she opened the black box Masato gave her... and then frowned as the girls asked after the price—*What does the price matter?*

“Maybe my next gift will just have to be a real condo—for us.” Masato’s voice and shy question—his big ask—almost had her squealing in excitement, but she clamped her hands over her mouth and kept listening for Yumeno’s response. *Say yes. Say yes. Say yes!*

She grumbled as a waiter interrupted the moment by asking for Yumeno’s attention, and frowned as the older girl stood and excused herself. *Answer the question!*

She frowned as a soft feeling of uncertainty and something akin to dread began to seep into her stomach, clawing its way slowly up into her chest to sink its way into her heart. Something was *off*. But then Masato’s voice still held a smile as she was granted leave, so he wasn’t upset, and so she pushed the icky feeling back down before moving backwards from the doorway and slipped off to another part of the club. The small group was drinking, and the night was still young enough that she could give the guys their birthday presents later.

“She’d definitely kill us for sure! But I’d still enjoy being your girl!”

Ran smiled as she walked through the club, the rush was calming down, and she wanted to catch Masato and Ichiban before they left to give them their presents. She’d spent a lot of time thinking over what she could buy either man that wouldn’t seem asinine or too childish. She’d had to just give them cards for Christmas, as she’d had to choose between birthday or Christmas presents—even though Christmas was more so a couples holiday—but *still*. Adjusting her mini backpack purse—a gift from Masato for her own birthday back in September—she moved through the club towards the VIP rooms and back in the direction of the group’s booth. She’d already given Yumeno her birthday present, a pretty set of hair accessories in three different shades of pearl, opal and pink to match her dresses and so she wasn’t concerned with catching the guys early—technically still several minutes short of their birthdays.

Biting her lip, she shifted her bag from her shoulder, and pulled it around to open it in preparation of her big reveal. She’d gotten Ichiban a new game for his PS2, and while he was more of a *Dragon Quest* fan, she sincerely hoped that he would enjoy *Final Fantasy IX*. It had taken her *weeks* to find out if he owned the console and then several days more past that to find out if he had the game or not. For Masato, she purchased something a bit more simple, and—to her own chagrin—plain; she’d seen a pair of 14k gold ball studs set with plain onyx earrings. It wasn’t flashy, or entirely useful, but he was always in something black and she’d only ever seen him with black diamonds, and onyx stones were said to hold calming and even healing properties—she wasn’t entirely sure how much stalk she point into that, but anything to lessen his bad health days was a win in her book.

Smiling at seeing the red and black wrapped presents still perfectly and patiently waiting to meet their new owners, she walked past the VIP entrance and stopped as the sight of Yumeno being pulled into the restroom by a patron caught her eye. It didn’t seem too pushy, or violent, and Yumeno didn’t seem distressed... *buutttt*... frowning, she zipped her bag closed and pulled it

back over her shoulders before slipping inside and into the small toiletries and supply closet behind them before the door could fully shut on her. Thankfully she was used to sneaking around, and she knew the layout of Zephyr by heart at this point.

“Yumeno!” She yelled after the vapid woman as she rushed through the club and into the hostess area; she was beyond simply mad or a bit angry, she was absolutely *pissed off* with the older woman. Since *when* has Masato ever been scary? Or creepy? And what *exactly* was she doing with that older guy?

“Eh?” Yumeno’s voice held confusion as she turned to face her and Ran forced herself to calm to speak to the woman; to ask her questions calmly instead of following her knee-jerk reaction and hitting her—that wouldn’t do her work career any favors.

“Are you cheating on Masato-san?” *Not what I meant to ask first, but...*

“Eh? Why are you asking such things, Ran-chan?” Yumeno’s voice was sickly sweet, and even if she didn’t already know that the woman was a liar and a cheater, she would’ve caught onto something being wrong with the way the woman’s eyes flickered in fear.

“I *heard* you.” She narrowed her eyes up at the older woman and crossed her arms over her chest, defensive and standing firm—or, attempting. “You told another patron that Masato-san is creepy and scary—he’s *not*. You also... you’re using him! He cares for you, and you’re using him!”

“You need to grow up, Ran-chan.” Yumeno’s sweet voice and smile dropped, and she couldn’t resist the snarl she let out in response to the way Yumeno’s beauty seemed to suddenly drop away like a veil, revealing the ugly and vileness beneath. “Look at this!” She blinked as Yumeno held out the black box and opened it, revealing a—ok, *slightly* gawdy—and extremely expensive, but still beautiful watch. It had a bit too many stones set into the band, but the watch face was gorgeous and the coloring of the thing matched Yumeno’s skin and makeup colors—things that she *knew* had been a discussion back in November.

“So? What’s your point?! Masato-san cares! And I *thought* you cared!” She held back the urge to rant more, to yell and scream, but she held it back and kept her temper in check. “If *you* don’t want his gift, then give. It. Back.”

“Eh? Why? Just scram, Ran-chan.” Yumeno’s face was an ugly sneer as she turned away and Ran bit back a growl before turning around and running out after Masato.

Her feet slid as she tried to stop moving, she’d seen who she thought was Masato being lifted—*that can’t be good*.

As soon as she was in the alley, she frowned and slowed her steps and her breathing as she listened for more signs that she'd seen Masato—or if she'd just seen someone else entirely.

“Hahaha, you think a toy gun makes you hot shit?” A rough and cold voice sounded back by the stairs, and she fought to lower her breathing forward as she moved closer to the stairwell.

“You think this is a toy?” Masato's voice was strained, winded and more than just a tad scared, but she knew the sound of his quiet tenor. His low timber was something that never failed to echo through her head, or any room, for that matter.

Scooting closer to the turn of the stairs, she knelt down and tried to stay out of sight as she listened to the conversation—the argument—for a sign of a lull to the tension. Her mom wasn't always at home, due to work, but her mom always taught her anything and everything she could think up to teach, or that Ran could ask. Her mom once said that all her wild scenarios came from her old real estate boss—Ran's father—and all the stupid shit he'd get pulled into because he was too dumb— *naive*—to know better.

She gasped as she heard the gun go off just as the crowd mere meters away from them yelled “ichi” in their New Years countdown—*what a bad luck inspiring start*.

Moving from her place, she carefully stood and eased herself around the stairs, keeping her eyes from following the ugly tan suit upwards, and instead focused her eyes on Masato as he sat on the stairs. In the year and a half since meeting him, she'd never once pitied him, had never looked down at him with sadness or able-bodied remorse... but right at that moment, she pitied the death of the last parts within his soul that hadn't yet been crushed by the world around him, turning his mind to cynicism and making his heart so black, broken, beaten and bruised. Stepping carefully around the blood pooling beneath the dead yakuza—most likely a grunt since his pin was merely Tojo and nothing else—and over to Masato.

The gun was still in his right hand, shaking from adrenaline and fear, and she was careful not to stand in the range of it as she reached out to carefully place her hand on his suit sleeve and not his bare skin or the hot metal of the handgun still smoking in his clenched fist. “Masato-san?” She kept her voice soft as she stepped a little closer and knelt on a few steps below him, looking up at him and carefully ran her free hand up his abs, sides, then over his chest, shoulders and neck—checking for wounds—before allowing her touch to drift back and rest her hand over his rapidly beating heart. An adrenaline fueled and emotional shock like this was in no possible way good for his bad heart or his weakened lungs.

“Masato?” She whispered to him as he stayed still, sorrow filling her voice as he stayed perfectly still, with wide eyes staring at the dead man behind her, and carefully wrapped her free arm around his waist.

“Go, Ran.” His voice was shaky and cold, distant and even cruel with the sharp and blatant dismissal, but she’d seen him bristle before and she’d never fled from his temper then, and she wasn’t going to now.

“No. You need help.” She frowned as she turned slightly in his arms and looked back at the dead man behind her. Sighing, she thought over their options to walk away from this. If there had been a simple beat down, and she’d actually *seen* the full fight, they could argue self-defense and her word—the daughter of a *cop*—would hold far greater sway than yet another dead yakuza. Especially since she knew the Tojo Clan’s Third Chairman, Sera Masaru, held a strict no-civilians policy. They’d walk away from this, Masato would be perfectly fine. *However*—he’d *shot* the man. Guns were illegal to own in Nihon, so any civilian with one—even in self-defense—would see jail time. With Masato’s health, she knew he wouldn’t survive that.

“He was found with the gun in his hand, Marina. He confessed—even if he claimed self-defense, he’d still do time for the possession charge.”

Taking a deep breath to steady her nerves, she pulled her bag from her back and pulled out the bandana she always kept with her, and gently wrapped it over the gun in his hand. “Let go.” Her mom was going to *kill* her if she ever found out about this, but... she *had* to. “Masato, let *go*.” She sighed as his grip lessened, and she carefully wrapped the gun in her bandana before putting it in her bag. She’d get rid of it later. “We need to move. *Now*.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Text

Ran sighed as she sat on a low sitting bench that she had moved from the living room to be next to the bathroom of Masato’s vast penthouse apartment. She’d somehow managed to get him home—after a short stop to duck into a restroom to clean the blood from his face—and he’d requested to bathe. He’d refused to let her help, and she hadn’t fought his logic, but she *had* fought to stay in his apartment to keep an eye on him. Before he’d undressed, she’d gathered a set of loungewear for him and had placed the small stack of clothes, along with a towel, close by to the large and accommodating bathtub. Now, she was sitting outside, wondering why he didn’t have a spare wheelchair—that was exceedingly stupid on everyone’s parts—and contemplating the fact she was now complicit in hiding evidence involved in a murder. Self-defense. Not that it would’ve mattered.

When she’d moved Masato from the stairs, they had gone *up* to avoid stepping into the ever growing puddle of blood and she’d braced herself as much as she possibly could to move Masato. They’d been stopped twice—by beat cops—and the story she had spun was that he was her older brother and a chronic health condition had hit out of nowhere while they were celebrating the New Year, and so she was taking him home. Masato, thankfully, had stayed quiet and simply nodded along with her tale.

“Ran.” Shaking her head clear of her thoughts, she moved from her seat and stood before carefully opening the door to see a fully dressed Masato sitting on a low chair nearby the tub. He looked like a stressed mess, and it honestly ripped apart her heart to see someone so strong succumbing to his body’s limits. The emotional blows, and then the assault, were all just insult to injury. “If I look up to see pity in your eyes, Ran, I’m kicking you out.”

“Not pity. Fear. Worry.” Sighing, she stepped into the room more fully and began to pick up his clothing from the floor to place in the hamper before moving to his side to once more pull him to his feet and help him walk. “Bedroom or living room?” She needed a direction before she started.

“... Bedroom. I’m... too tired.” His voice was tired, strung out and exhausted, but he still managed to make that annoyed tsking noise he always did, and so she listened without comment. It was far easier to half walk/half carry him into his bedroom, and then get him sitting up on his western style bed, than it had been to walk the many blocks here.

“I... I heard what Yumeno said.” She stopped speaking as his dark eyes turned towards her, flashing with anger and she looked away before he could snarl at her. “I confronted her about it.” She kept her hands busy as she adjusted his pillows, pulled the blankets up to his waist for him, and then moved over to the table with his medications where a glass decanter with water sat to pour him a cup of the cooling and refreshing liquid. “You’re not scary or creepy, Masato.”

“... You’re a child, Ran. What do you know of the world?” Masato huffed as he spoke, his hand around the glass shaking slightly with leftovers from the adrenaline shocks and she stepped forward to steady his shaking hand before he could drop the glass.

“I know that most yakuza in this town are pig headed assholes, and that no one will miss that rank-and-file grunt. He wasn’t a Patriarch. His clan pin was simply ‘Tojo’ too, that means no immediate family. Division Four will ask for the Tojo to hand over someone nameless, the Tojo Patriarch that does will pay their man’s ‘retirement’ to their family—if they have one—and the TMPD will be satisfied. Case closed.” She rattled off the information that she’d learnt from her mother and Detective Date years ago when her dumbass father had been arrested and her mother had demanded answers from her senpai.

“You know this *how*?” Masato questioned as his head turned towards her and he let his water glass go. She sighed as she watched him lean back into his pillows, and fidgeted as she thought over how much to tell him.

“My mother is a cop, and she’ll answer almost any questions I come up with. The Tōkyō PD and their relationship to the Tojo was one of them. She explained a lot.” Ran fidgeted with her hands as she looked down and away from Masato’s questioning gaze. She didn’t really *like* or *dislike* the Tojo, but she definitely could think them all ridiculous, posturing *idiots*.

"I see." Masato grew quiet then before laying back into his pillows more and closing his eyes. She said nothing about the silent tears that began to slowly, but steadily, fall down his cheeks.

After several minutes of staring out his large windows overlooking the city, she turned back towards the bed and proceeded to carefully climb up onto the bed to sit in the middle of it, on his non-dominate left side and pulled her bag from her back to pull out the box wrapped in matte black paper with metallic silver stripes over it, and a matching dark gray bow. "Happy Birthday, Masato-san."

"What?" Masato's voice was a bit rougher than it was earlier in the night, but it also held a bit more clarity after his silent breakdown. "You..."

"Please?" She shifted how she was sitting, moving from her legs being crossed and folded before her, to sitting up as well as she could on her knees before holding out the box.

It was several minutes before he finally took the box, and she anxiously watched him as he slowly peeled off her careful wrapping. She hoped it wouldn't be deemed asinine, or that he didn't somehow already have the pair of earrings that she'd bought.

She briefly smiled when he first lifted the top of the box, and a slight look of surprise slightly brightened his features, but she quickly dropped her smile as his brow creased into a frown and she felt her heart drop from her chest and into her stomach. She stayed still however, as he remained silent and his expression darkened. Perhaps she shouldn't have given them right now... or maybe after Yumeno, she shouldn't have so soon... or... possibly even *at all*. As the silence stretched, she fought back a snuffle, and resolutely ignored the way her vision was blurring. Moving from his side, she shifted backwards—head down—and crawled off the bed before quickly and silently walking out of his room to get to her shoes.

She was quiet as she zipped her bag closed, pulled on her boots and stepped out of the apartment, making certain to lock the door behind her, and began her long walk back home.

She wouldn't cry. She *would not* cry.

She cried.

Chapter 3

Chapter Text

Tōkyō, Nihon

december 31/january 1 2007

Ran hummed as she walked around the grand ballroom, staying quiet as she sought to stay in the shadows in order to escape her mother's schemes to introduce her to the children—mostly sons—of her friends and coworkers. She was in no mood to meet anyone tonight. Or *ever*. Her senpai Seraphina—also her roommate—at Uni insisted that she was either incapable of love, or had once had her heart so thoroughly broken that she no longer held the capacity for such emotions, and though she'll never tell the older girl *anything*, she couldn't deny the pest had a *point*.

She'd not really been the same after New Years back in 2001, when her childish belief in love stories was ripped out from under her, and then... as her heart had been shattered. Somewhere in storage, her old—and once very much loved—backpack sat innocently among other odds and ends from her childhood, still holding a video game wrapped in red paper waiting for someone that would never get it, and a long barreled pistol wrapped in a black and purple bandana stained with gun powder and blood. In a way, that bag held the death of her once hopelessly romantic ideals, and she'd survived Kamurocho without it.

*"You're a **child**, what do you know of the world?"*

Closing her eyes, she willed away the memories and focused instead on not tripping on the long skirt of her dress as she sipped at her non-alcoholic Shirley Temple—an American drink—but a vast improvement from the sparkling cider that her mother had originally ordered for her. This *asinine* party was going to drive her absolutely insane.

"Aoki-san! You're clearly very bright and sophisticated." The over saccharine voice jarred her, and she hummed as she turned to look for the annoying harpy, finding her near the balcony and standing beside her husband while talking to a young man with conservatively slicked back hair, donned in a black suit and forcing a pleasant smile on his face. Smiling sharply and cruelly, she moved from the edge of the room over to where the harpy was currently roosting, for she did so *love* to harass the older woman—it didn't matter that the woman hadn't been the one to shatter her heart into a million pieces, she'd still been the catalyst.

"Yumeno-san!" She smiled pleasantly as she lifted the skirt of her dress to better, and more easily, maneuver her way through the crowd and to Yumeno's side. The ex-hostess hated her existence, as she was a walking reminder of her old job—and because she'd thoughtlessly gifted Ran her birthday watch for her own, playing it off as if she'd *just* purchased the thing. Out of spite, she'd taken to wearing the beautiful and expensive—still slightly gawdy—watch in order to torment the woman. "It has been so very long since I last saw you!"

She smiled her best and sweetest facade, playing innocent even as she made sure to flash the watch among the small group. Horinouchi may not know who she was, and that was for the better of her mother's career, but Yumeno knew. She made sure of it.

"Shiraishi-san." Watching the woman falter was divine, but the best way to disturb the older woman was always to say very little to her. When she'd regained some of her posture, Yumeno

continued speaking, “Ah, I didn’t see you come in. I was busy discussing Bleach Japan with the founder here, Aoki Ryo-san.”

She smiled and turned as the ex-hostess—the gold digger—gestured towards her companion to introduce her to the other.

“Aoki-san is also running for Governor. The *youngest*, if he wins.” Yumeno explained to her, and she politely nodded, knowing to drop her game and to behave in front of this particular politician. “Aoki-san, this is Shiraishi Ran-san. She is a first year art student in University, she also is in Journalism and has written a few short essays that have been featured in different papers and magazines. Perhaps, you could hire her as your script writer? Or, just for PR on your campaign?”

“Perhaps, Horinouchi-san. That would require a resume, for propriety.” Aoki spoke calmly and clearly, and she smiled slightly, despite herself, at the chance to step up in her career—to step further away from her father’s shadow and her mother’s matchmaking.

“Well, I’ll allow you two time to talk and get acquainted. Excuse me, I must find my husband.” Yumeno smiled in that overly saccharine and sweet voice before hurrying away from them as fast as she could while in a long dress and heels.

“One day, her teeth will rot from that tone.” She huffed as she lifted her glass and sipped. “Either that, or *mine* will.”

“You do not like Horinouchi-san?” Aoki questioned, and she sighed before shaking her head in answer. “Bad blood?”

“...” She sighed as she once more fiddled with the ring on her right middle finger, gazing down at the beautiful black toned band set with a marquis cut black diamond, “She broke the heart of a mutual... *acquaintance* ... and it killed him.”

“A broken heart?” Aoki’s voice was soft, and she hummed as she let him lift her hand to look over her ring. “You worry the stone too much, it is coming loose.”

“Noted.” She hummed softly as she took her hand back and moved to take another sip of her drink, but stopped mid-motion as she caught sight of her mother walking through the crowd with a young man in tow. Groaning, she moved and slipped off her heels to hide behind Aoki. Propriety be *damned*—she didn’t want a boyfriend.

“I assume your mother?” Aoki’s tone was teasing, and she lightly elbowed him in response. “I take that as a ‘yes’.”

“Ssssh.” She hissed quietly as she tried to stay invisible and small, away from her mother’s gaze. “If you shush, I’ll do an editorial in the student paper—as well as my op-ed—on your campaign. *Without* my usual fee.”

“... Deal.”

Chapter 4

Chapter Text

She hummed as she stood out on the balcony with Aoki, holding her high heeled stilettos in one hand as she kept the other solidly on the railing. They'd slipped away from the party, and she'd found herself relaxing around him more and more the longer they spoke. She didn't agree with everything he said—Bleach Japan for one; that whole good in theory but bad in practice thing—but he was smart, clever and could hold a solid conversation that wasn't vapid or complete bullshit.

“So... why *are* you avoiding your mother?” Aoki questioned, and she chuckled a bit before turning to look at him instead of the crowds far below them.

“She wants me to date. And... I never have. Not once.” She answered him, keeping her voice low as she did. She was *still* hiding from her mother after all. “Besides, she keeps introducing me to guys that might as well be children still for all the cotton filling the space between their ears.”

The laugh Aoki let out then made her smile, and she couldn't hold back from releasing a laugh of her own. It was a good laugh, one full of mirth and just a tad of bittersweet cruelty. It was the laugh of a man that very rarely, if at all, laughed and yet it was a good sound. “You are very high maintenance, Shiraishi-san.”

“Perhaps.” She hummed and smirked as she took a step closer to him to take him by the hand and gently tugged him back towards the party. “Come on, the countdown is beginning.” She smiled as he let her tug him back inside of the large hall, and she pulled him after her until they had a good view of the tv counting down to the New Year.

“Any wishes for the New Year?” Aoki's voice and breath were at her ear, him bending forward instead of yelling over the crowd, and she was thankful for it. “Don't say it out loud, or it won't come true.”

“Ok.” She nodded as the countdown began and she felt Aoki's hand lightly rest on her lower back, just a show of support and possibly a power play to keep her mother and her would-be suitors at bay—she'd ask him later.

“Go!”

“Yon!”

“San!”

“Ni!” *I wish for this year to be a good one. I wish to be happy—*

“**Ich!**” Her eyes flew open as she felt a soft pair of lips kiss her cheek just as the countdown reached one.

She smiled as she carefully leaned back in the passenger seat of Aoki’s beautiful black sports car; her feet were sore from standing in her heels, and to avoid her mother trying to introduce her to yet another wannabe suitor, she’d accepted to go on a drive with the young hot shot politician.

“This car is *gorgeous*.” She cooed as she sat up a little and watched the small smirk on his lips grow a bit more. “Do you always do this? Give all the girls a speech on your ideals, let them hide from their mothers and then take them for a drive in a beautiful sports car?”

“No.” Aoki chuckled again, and she smiled as they slowed, coming to a stop light. They were slowly winding their way out of the heart of Tōkyō, and she was more than happy to leave her mother’s world far behind her. Even if only for one night. “Just the really pretty girls.”

She couldn’t hold back her giggle at the sincerity of his words, normally a line like that and she’d laugh in disgust or derision, but the tone in his voice held a heavy weight to it. “Flatterer.”

“Perhaps.” Aoki smiled softly then, and she sighed as she leant back in her seat.

“This is nice, thank you, Aoki.” She muttered the words, but still smiled at his reply a few quiet minutes later.

“Call me Ryo.”

Chapter 5

Notes:

cw: herein lies light smut

Chapter Text

Ran was content as she laid in bed beside Ryo; his bed was a soft and highly comfortable western style, made up with black and gray sheets and covered by a thick black comforter. Ryo was in no way her first time having sex, but he was definitely the best that she’d had; attentive and exploratory, he’d found her pleasure as well as took his own. The classmates she’d slept with never had any idea what they were doing, and she always had to argue with them to use protection, but Ryo had been a step ahead of her for the entirety of their encounter. It was nice to let go of her control for once, and from the look of sheer rapture that had crossed over Ryo’s face as she made him cum, she could only assume that it had been the same for him.

“Thank you.” Ryo’s voice was soft, and the words pulled her from her thoughts, briefly causing the hand she’d been lightly trailing over his chest to still as she looked up at him. “For a good birthday.”

Blinking, she smiled softly and moved to first sit up and bend over him to press another soft kiss to his lips before straddling him once more. Reaching down, she lightly gripped and rubbed him until he once more grew hard enough to take her and she adjusted her hips to lower herself back down on him. “Let me pleasure you this time, then. As a gift.”

Chapter 6

Chapter Text

Tōkyō, Nihon

february 10, 2007

Ran bit her lip as she sat at her desk, listening to Ryo giving a campaign speech and trying to take notes even as her mind kept drifting. Ever since meeting on New Years, they’d exchanged several emails, she’d visited him every weekend, and they’d spent as much time working on their separate careers as she spent impaled on him, straddling his waist in bed and releasing stress buildup from the past week. Now, it was almost Valentine’s Day, and she hadn’t heard from him all week; she knew *logically* that he was campaigning but it hadn’t kept the faint sense of dread from filling up her gut. They’d not spoken promises of anything to each other, but she’d hoped for *something* special. A lunch, a dinner. Seeing him. A phone call. Even a simple text would be welcome. *This is why I never see anyone this long.*

Sighing, she pulled the headphones from her ears and rested her head on her arms on her desk. They weren’t even *dating*, so *why* was she expecting something on Valentine’s Day?

You’re caring more than they are again. She huffed at her own inner voice—a voice that sounded annoyingly like her preteen self—and the accuracy and admonishment within the tone. She couldn’t even argue with it.

“Happy Birthday, Masato-san.”

“What?” Masato’s voice was a bit rougher than it was earlier in the night, but it also held a bit more clarity after his silent breakdown. “You...”

“Please?” She shifted how she was sitting, moving from her legs being crossed and folded before her, to sitting up as well as she could on her knees before holding out the box.

It was several minutes before he finally took the box, and she anxiously watched him as he slowly peeled off her careful wrapping. She hoped it wouldn't be deemed asinine, or that he didn't somehow already have the pair of earrings that she'd bought.

She'd learnt the hard way not to care for people, and yet she'd begun to do it yet again. Maybe she was insane? The definition of insanity, after all, is to repeat the same action over and over while expecting a different result.

She lifted her head and frowned as she glanced over at the blue and white wrapping paper that hid a small black box holding a set of cufflinks inside, waiting for their new owner to open them. Buying them had been an impulse purchase, as she'd actually gone to the jewelry store to have her ring cleaned and her watch battery replaced; the cufflinks were a western vintage style, imported, with a black titanium stud and a black ruby with small white gemstones lining the larger centerpiece.

Staring at the box made her think of the last gift she'd given to someone, and she felt her stomach twist as it slammed into her heart and painfully twisted it once more.

She briefly smiled when he first lifted the top of the box, and a slight look of surprise slightly brightened his features, but she quickly dropped her smile as his brow creased into a frown and she felt her heart drop from her chest and into her stomach. She stayed still however, as he remained silent and his expression darkened.

Was she *really* doing this again?

As the silence stretched, she fought back a sniffle, and resolutely ignored the way her vision was blurring. Moving from his side, she shifted backwards—head down—and crawled off the bed...

He hadn't even called after her. He had *never* returned to Zephyr. Then, on her thirteenth birthday, Yumeno had regifted that watch he'd bought her for her own birthday and she'd nearly thrown the gift back in the older woman's face—*until...* until the news of his death had been reported and she'd clung to the box crying and praying to the Kami and Buddha in a vain attempt for it to be *wrong* and for him to come back.

For about a week, she'd waited every night at Zephyr, anxiously hoping that he'd come through the door with Ichiban close behind him and everything since New Years would turn out to have only been a very long fever dream.

It had never really set in for her until she'd snuck out to the graveyard and saw his name engraved on the prayer stone.

Shaking her head to clear out the cobwebs, she sat back up and unlocked her phone to listen to the recorded speech one more time. Blinking at the sight of a notification, as she hadn't heard or felt her phone go off, she tilted her head and unlocked the screen to open the chat app.

Ryo: Do you have plans for Valentine's Day?

Ryo: What do you say to dinner and a show?

Ryo: Really pretty girls deserve special days.

She blinked once more as she reread the messages, and slowly smiled at the surprise of it.

Ran: I'd love to. Pickup time and type of clothing?

She waited for a reply, smiling slightly as she thought over possible outfits, depending on where exactly he had in mind for them to go. At the feeling of her phone vibrating, she looked back down and smiled.

Ryo: 5pm. Formal; long dress preferably. Light shawl or sweater recommended.

Ran: See you then.

[Chapter 7](#)

Chapter Text

Ran smiled as she walked out of her dorm hall to the very familiar black sports car, and waved slightly as Ryo stood straight from his slouched position against the side of the car. He looked

nice—well, *nicer* than usual—in a black fitted suit, with a dark gray vest over a lighter blue-gray button down and a solid black tie. Smiling at it, she hummed in relief at the sheer luck of her long black corset top and ballgown bottomed dress, that she'd purchased especially for this, would match his suit. She'd offset the solid color with a warm, but not too bulky dark purple sweater that flared out almost like a trench coat or a western cape, with a wide mouth hood in case of snow or rain.

"I hope this is alright?" She fidgeted slightly under his gaze; about to break under the several minutes of silence and turn around to do—*she didn't know what*—but something else. She might have a lighter colored dress, something a bit brighter... or maybe... looking down at the top half of her dress, she frowned as she second guessed the corset style that she'd loved *oh so much* when she was trying it on in the store, but now—*maybe I should've bought something more conservative? Do I even own conservative clothing?* "I can go change. Ten minutes." She had that long blue dress and that black peacoat—just a swap out of the purple hair accessories for a set of blue ones...

"Ran." She stopped mid-stride back towards the dorm building at the sound of Ryo's voice and the light brushing of his fingers on her hip, keeping her still as he stepped to her and then slowly around her. "You look amazing. I was just... admiring."

She frowned as she watched his dark eyes and searched the lines of his face for any signs of lies or placating; finding none, she let out a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding and allowed him to turn her back towards his car and help her inside.

"My apologies for my silence, I was just caught off guard. I had thought the dress you were wearing when we met was the height of clothing that could highlight your beauty." Ryo's voice was soft as he explained and drove through the city, once away from the center and towards the more open districts within the prefecture.

"I..." Sighing, she closed her eyes as she rubbed her brow and tried to force back the feelings of dread and insecurity that had sent her heart jackhammering in her chest with the fear. "You scared me." She finally admitted as she stared at her lap and fiddled with the small gift box through the fabric of her small clutch string purse.

Am I really doing this again? She'd once thought nothing deeper into how much thought, care and planning she'd put into buying gifts before. She cared, she liked the person, she wanted to see them smile. Simple as that. But then... her last gift had just... *sat in limbo*. She didn't even know what had happened to the pair of earrings; if he'd ever worn them or if he had discarded them.

"Ran?" She startled and gasped out a breath as she felt Ryo's knuckles suddenly and gently brush against her cheek, raising her attention to the fact she was *crying*. "What's wrong?"

She shook her head and pulled the passenger side visor down to carefully check and fix her makeup, calming her breathing and then raising the visor back into place before shifting slightly in her seat to loosely wrap her fingers around his bicep. "Just... pesky memories."

She smiled as she held onto Ryo's arm and watched the ballet in rapt attention. She'd mentioned *once* how she'd always wanted to attend, but never could justify the cost of the tickets, and he'd not only remembered but *planned* this. He'd had to have pre-ordered the tickets, paid premium to get them perfect seats *and* done it before they'd really known each other more than a handful of days. Was it a *tad* bit OCD? Yes. Did she care? *No*. Not one single *fucking* bit; because he'd cared enough to listen and then did his best to do something special for her.

As the curtain dropped for the intermission, she turned in her seat, cupped the right side of his face to turn him towards her, and quickly pressed a soft kiss to his cheek. "Thank you so much, Ryo. You didn't have to. We could've just had dinner—or I would've been happy just being able to see you." She smiled as she reached up to push a stray strand of hair back into place for him, taking a minute to breathe before continuing, "But this is so above and beyond that I... I'm lucky to have you."

[Chapter 8](#)

Chapter Text

Ran sighed as she stared at the small box that she hadn't had the emotional strength to give to Ryo yesterday. She'd returned to her dorm early in the morning, with just barely enough time to shower and get to her classes. Now she had time to sit and relax and all she'd been doing instead was staring at that box. Just... *staring*. It wasn't even like he'd gifted her anything physically tangible, and yet here she was feeling inadequate. Staring at this box and thinking over the last gift she'd given a man older than her.

Oh sure, she'd been an innocent child and had saved up for such a small, inconsequential thing without a second thought. All she had wanted to do was make Masato smile. She knew now that some part of her had fostered a crush on the man, but back then all she'd thought was he was her friend. Maybe something in her brain had gotten crossed from the fact she didn't have many friends and had confused acquaintance and niceties with friend and caring. She'd replayed those two years of knowing Masato, Ichiban and Yumeno through her head so many times over the years and yet she was no closer to having any answers.

Sighing, she moved the box to a drawer of her dresser for safekeeping until White Day; she'd give the cuff links to him then.

She smiled as she adjusted her camera and took a few test shots of Ryo as he stood up on the stage to announce his victory of becoming Governor of Tōkyō at a record setting speed and age. To the untrained eye, one would merely think that he was adjusting his suit jacket sleeves, but she knew his tells at this point and she could see the way his nerves were beginning to get

to him with the way his pupils were beginning to dilate. Moving a bit closer to the stage, finding a position that would give him a clear view, she called out to him.

“Aoki-san!” She waited the half beat for him to turn his head, and she smiled up at him before raising her camera. “Smile, Aoki-san!”

She couldn’t resist her giggle at the small glare he shot her as she lowered her camera, and she kept his gaze as his pupils slowly returned to a more normal size before nodding to him and shifting back to her designated spot among the crowd of reporters. It was small and inconsequential, but she wanted him to know she had his support. That she was here for him.

Chapter 9

Chapter Text

Tōkyō, Nihon

march 14, 2007

She checked her watch as she sat on the bench by the dorms, waiting for Ryo to pull up and go out to dinner. Nothing had been planned past that for their White Day date.

She checked her watch again and frowned as the minute hand marked ten minutes late. Ryo was never late. Something may have come up.

She fiddled with her watch once more before checking her phone for any missed calls or texts, and tried not to frown down at the lack of notifications on her screen.

She pulled out her phone once more and pulled up the chat thread she kept with Ryo. Had she missed something?

Ryo: Do you have plans for White Day?

Ryo: What do you say to dinner?

Ran: I’d like that. Time and dress?

Ryo: 6pm. Casual/formal.

Ran: I’ll see you then.

Frowning, she fiddled with the gift box hidden once more in her small clutch string purse and checked the time on her watch again. Forty-five minutes late. Did something come up? Did something happen?

Fiddling with her phone again, she pulled up his contact and called. It rang... and clicked to voicemail. Blinking down at the screen, she ended the call.

It wasn't dread filling her this time, but worry was beginning to seep into her, and she fought back the numbness and doubt that kept threatening to lace its fingers into her mind.

She checked her watch again. An hour late.

Pulling open the chat thread once more, she began typing.

Ran: Ryo? Everything ok?

Ran: Ryo? Where are you?

She frowned as the minutes stretched on. One hour became two. Two became three.

She left the bench and returned to her dorm.

She sat reading her school book, taking notes and studying for her end of semester exams hours later when her phone chimed with a message and she frowned down at it. For a few brief seconds, she contemplated ignoring it; that chime was specifically saved for Ryo, and she really didn't want anything to do with him right now. *But* ... she wanted answers, and so she picked up the phone as a second chime rang through the room.

Ryo: Will you come down here?

Sighing, she got up out of bed and pulled her boots and a jacket on before grabbing the gift box and walking down with her arms crossed over her chest. There, right where she'd expected him

hours before, sat Ryo's car and the man himself was lounging back against the side as he always did. At a distance, he looked tired, but up close, he looked a bit worse for wear.

"You look like shit." *Not what I'd meant to say, but... accurate.*

"You're angry." There was a rasp in his voice, rough but clear, from deep in his chest and she sighed as she stepped a bit closer.

"You shouldn't be up or out, should you?" Despite asking it, she knew the answer immediately as his gaze dropped from her own. "You need to rest."

"It's just bronchitis." He coughed as he spoke the diagnosis, almost as if speaking it into existence. She sighed as she stepped to him and gently placed a hand on his neck, avoiding cupping his cheek and touching the mask or disrupting it. Tilting his head slightly away from her, she stepped closer to press a soft kiss to his neck before wrapping her arms around him and resting her head on his chest, over his heart. His heart was racing, his skin was warm, he had a flush to his skin and she could hear his lungs rasping. That was *not* just bronchitis—he was working his way to pneumonia.

"Is that the official diagnosis?" She questioned as she gently, but tightly, held him and rubbed over his back as another coughing fit wracked through his body. "Because if it was, get a different doctor. You have pneumonia, Ryo. I've heard it enough to know the difference."

"I'm not an invalid." Ryo's voice was rough and raspy, and the sharpness of his snapping only caused another, worse round of coughing. Another rasping noise caught in his lungs, and as he fell forward, she yelped and braced herself to catch his weight; she would never allow him to fall.

"You're going to run yourself into the ground if you try to work like this." Frowning, she shifted them and opened the passenger side car door before making him sit down and back in the seat. "Let me get a bag together and my books, and I'll take you home."

She frowned as Ryo batted her hand away from the strands of hair falling into his face, and she blinked as his dark eyes flashed in anger, mixed and bitterly entwined with no small amount of hatred—whether at her or himself, she didn't know. "Do you hate me for caring?"

"I don't need your *pity*, Ran." His voice was low and dark, and with the tone, she sighed at the answer to her unspoken question: he hated *himself*.

"Not pity. Worry." She sighed as she watched him a bit longer before pulling the small gift box from her jacket pocket and handed it to him. "Here, open that and I'll be right back."

She smiled as she walked back out of her dormitory to see Ryo still sitting in his car, in the passenger seat and with the door closed and the car idling. Opening the driver side door, she

leant in and placed her bags in the backseat before sitting next to him and watching as his chest slowly rose and fell with his breathing. His face was flushed, his hair was falling over his face, and a light sheen of sweat was covering his skin even as a red flush inched up his neck. "I'll take care of you while you heal up, ok?" She smiled softly as he nodded and she shifted the car into drive to take him back home.

She frowned as she watched Ryo fitfully sleep. He'd placed the box of cufflinks on his dresser, next to his watch case, as soon as they'd walked through the bedroom door and he'd refused her help as he promptly changed into a fresh shirt that wasn't drenched with sweat. He'd resolutely refused her to touch him as he fought against the coughing and pulled himself up into the middle of his bed. He'd been asleep ever since then, and she'd spent the hours curled with her legs to her chest in her favorite chair as she watched over him.

Through the worry, something kept nagging at the back of her mind, causing her mind to drift away from Ryo and cycle over random moments over the last few months.

Shaking her head, she untangled herself from the chair and moved over to lay next to him in bed. She was too tired to overthink whatever was nagging at her, and she needed her own rest. Especially if she was going to be here to make sure Ryo rested and recovered.

[Chapter 10](#)

Chapter Text

Tōkyō, Nihon

march 28, 2007

It was by accident that she found the little black box, as she hadn't been trying to snoop, just look for the file that Ryo had said would be in his desk. She'd even initially ignored it, until she'd moved a stack of folders and saw a piece of matte black and metallic silver wrapping paper folded in a small square at the bottom of the drawer.

When Ryo came looking for her later, it was to find her sitting and staring at the contents of the open black box where a set of ball stud, onyx earrings sat innocently—still carefully pinned to the soft black felt of the padding—as they had been the last time she'd seen them before very carefully wrapping the gift. On the inside of the box cover sat a small card, in slightly scratchy childish handwriting with a note reading: "*Happy Birthday Masato!*"

[Chapter 11](#)

Chapter Text

Ryo: Ran, answer your phone.

received - march 29

Ryo: Ran, please answer your phone.

received - march 30

Aoki: Ran-san, would you please answer your phone?

received - april 3

Aoki: Shiraishi; allow me to explain.

received - april 5

Asshole: Shiraishi-san, please answer your phone and allow me to explain.

received - april 12

Asshole:

Asshole: Please don't leave me

received - may 13

[Chapter 12](#)

Notes:

(See the end of the chapter for [notes](#).)

Chapter Text

Kamurocho, Shinjuku, Tōkyō

may 13, 2007

"You're *eighteen*! What do you *mean* that you're pregnant?" Her mother's voice echoed around the small space of their front room as she sat with her head bowed and not looking up. She hadn't thought she'd missed a day, or somehow messed up, but apparently the cold she'd gotten back in March after tending to Ryo through his own small bout with the flu was enough to interfere with her birth control—who knew that antibiotics could render birth control null and void? "Who's the father? You've never dated!"

She couldn't blame her mother for the anger and the yelling, but she was growing tired of hearing it. Also, she had a piece to write and needed to leave soon. "Are you finished?" She'd been yelling, lecturing and pacing for the better half of the morning, and it was now well past lunch. "Because I have work to do, and I can't do it here."

"No I'm not finished!" Her mother snapped, and she bit back her own temper as she waited for the woman to dismiss her. "But go. We'll discuss this later!"

She didn't hesitate to move and walked as fast as she could away from her mother, pulling on her shoes and grabbing her bag before rushing out of her childhood home. She would sneak back later and pack her last things later in the week, and just not go back. Taking a deep breath to calm herself, she adjusted her bag and walked to the station. She had a job to cover another speech of Aoki's, and despite her still burning anger seething beneath her skin, his message that morning had nearly ripped her heart from her chest. It had sounded so small and fragile, and she was honestly worried of what he may do if she never spoke to him again.

It had been two months since she'd last seen or spoken to the man, and she'd spent the time trying to sift through her emotions over the revelation she'd had. She was still no closer to figuring any of it out, though.

Moving through the crowd of reporters, she adjusted her camera and swallowed her nerves as she called out to catch the attention of the man sitting on the stage before her. "Aoki-san! Smile!"

She frowned as she looked up at the sounds of dress shoes lightly clicking on the stone walk up to the house where she was currently sitting perched on the front stairs. A few feet before her, looking a tad more tired and stressed than she'd seen him for awhile, was Aoki Ryo. After a few minutes of staring, she shifted and hummed softly as he moved and slowly sat down on the stair beside her.

"I should hate you." *Again, not what I meant to say...*

“You don’t?” Ryo’s voice was quiet, low and the sound was very similar to that of her memories, dreams and sometimes even nightmares.

“No.” She enjoyed Ryo too much. “I’m just angry.”

“You have every right to be.” Ryo’s voice was soft and low, closer to how it used to be.

She huffed out a breath through her nose to steady herself, and turned to face him instead of staring out straight in front of her. “Masato.” She waited for him to look at her before she placed a hand to his cheek and pressed a kiss to his lips. “Make it up to me.”

Notes:

- if you take antibiotics while on birth control and then have sex, you can and will get pregnant. fair warning.

Chapter 13

Chapter Text

She rested her chin on her hands as she laid in bed next to Masato, watching him sleep and listening to the way his heart steadily beat in time to the slow rise and fall of his chest as he breathed. She felt absolutely ridiculous that she hadn’t recognized him and had even ignored those nagging feelings that kept trying to tell her that something about him was familiar. Sighing out through her nose, she shifted her head to rest it over his toned pec and moved her hands to rest one on her own stomach while the other began lightly tracing her fingertips up and down the lines of his abs. He wasn’t ripped, but he was lean and toned; even his once frail legs were muscular and held no signs of the atrophy he’d endured from two decades in a wheelchair.

In between their bouts of make-up sex, they had talked and Masato had gone on a borderline deranged rant filled and fueled by so much pain, disdain and self-hatred that all she’d been able to do was hold him in a hopeless bid to comfort him. There were no words to be said in response to that type of pain.

A few more things made sense now, of course. Like the way he’d move her out of his lap if she straddled him while he was sitting in a chair or on the couch, or how he’d never let her stay on top and ride him for too long. He liked to lift her, bury into her while holding her up against a wall, or while she lay sprawled back on his desk; he hated anything that made him feel weak. She couldn’t fault him for any of it, and she didn’t even mind it; though, she still really wanted to show him a few things, and one of which had distantly rattled around in her head for about two or three years now.

“You’re overthinking something.” His voice was soft and slightly gravelly from sleep, and she smiled as a hand carded through her hair before lifting her head from his chest to look up at him. Like this, she could definitely see how Aoki Ryo and Arakawa Masato were the same

person; without his glasses, and his hair a mess, she could see the curve of his cheekbones better and the way his once pallor and sunken cheeks had been replaced with the more healthy skin tone and slight weight to his face. She'd once thought that his perpetual frown was due to a never ending loop of constant pain, and now having seen him for months and months without that dark glower, she was damn sure she had been correct.

"I'm thinking of how when I was a kid, that I thought you were very handsome. How what others might have called a scary or intimidating glare, I always thought you were just in a constant loop of pain. You also have a healthier skin tone, your cheeks don't look sunk in, and listening to your lungs and heart now... I'm glad you're better." She stopped as he looked away and got a bit of that dark glare full of self-hate again. Sighing softly, she slowly sat up and tugged him up with her. "I used to have a crush on you, you know."

"I know." Masato's voice was low, in that old tenor that had once plagued her sleep but now soothed the sharp pointy bits of her soul. "I realized it when you gave me those earrings. I at first thought you'd been mocking me, then I realized you couldn't have bought the earrings *after* Yumeno; after that thought was nixed, I thought it was a pity gift. By the time I'd gone through it all, you were long gone. There was never going to be anything from it, of course. I didn't recognize you. It wasn't until I walked in to find you holding that box and looking broken apart that I realized why something about you felt familiar."

She hummed as they sat side by side in his bed in the quiet of just the other's simple existence. Thinking over their fight over the past few months, their history... and the trouble she had recently discovered.

"You truly don't think you were handsome back then?" It was a possible powder keg of a question to address first, but she kept thinking of her first dreams that had flitted through her early puberty addled mind.

"I was weak, frail." The bitter anger in his response made her frown, and she huffed before pushing their covers back and climbing off the bed, pulling him up with her as she moved through his house to his office. His desk chair had a slighter taller back than his old wheelchair, but the arm rests sat at about the same height, and she could easily move with the open arms—it was also sturdy as hell.

"Sit." She glared slightly as he stood before her, arms crossed over his chest in defiance and she huffed before gently pushing him down into the chair. "You and I need to have a discussion, Masato." She kept a hand on his chest as he moved to get out of the chair, and she put a bit more pressure on him. "I never thought you weak, Masato."

"You would've eventually. If I had stayed like that." Masato's voice was a low and gruff tone, annoyed and angry. This would most likely devolve into another argument, but she had a point to make first.

"Do you want to know what my first sexual thought was?" She asked, but continued on before he could reply—she didn't really want an answer. "It was of *you*." She smiled softly as his eyes

raised to her own, his face briefly lighting up in shock, and with his attention fully on her, she moved and carefully straddled him. "I dreamt of Arakawa Masato. Two years dead by the time I turned fifteen, and I was still dreaming about my first crush." She gently ran her hands through his hair, further messing it up and pushing it back to some semblance of the way he used to wear it.

"Why?" His voice was soft, unsure and she sighed before pressing in close to him, pressing her bare chest to his own and gently pressing her lips to the pulse at his throat. "Why do you want me back in that fucking chair?"

"You misunderstand me." She pulled back and frowned as she ran her hands through his hair and down the back of his neck, kneading and massaging at the tense muscles. "I don't want you feeling trapped like that. I know you hated it. I mean, I dreamt of you as I'd last seen you. In that black and thin gray pinstripe suit, with your hair back like this, chest slightly on display and that confident way you walked."

"Hm." Masato chuckled softly, and she smiled at the sound of that tsking noise that she'd always thought to be so cute. "You like the slightly gothic, bad boy look." She giggled and nodded, smiling wider as he let out a laugh and his hands moved from the armrests to her thighs. "How are you with me now, then?"

"Because I'm not vapid or shallow." She smiled as she leant forward to kiss at his neck again. "I like your mind, your personality. Would I *like* to see you dressed up like that again?" She moved then and rocked her hips against his, rubbing her core over him, and smiled at the way his eyes fluttered closed. "Yes. Very much so."

"Hmmm. Can you explain to me then, why I'm stuck in this chair?" His voice was still a bit annoyed, but it was far more husky than angry.

"Close your eyes for me." She instructed him instead of answering outright. She had a point to make. "Did you ever think of your girl perched in your lap? Her warmth pressed close to you as she slowly began to rock her hips?"

"No one would've." The surety in his voice made her frown, and she sighed at the deep scars that ran through his mind and over his heart. "For many reasons, there were a whole *plethora* of them."

"Well... that's what I dreamt of. The first night I ever had a sex dream; I was perched in your lap like this, you were sitting on a long couch and you were buried in me as I moved above you. You were in that black suit, your hair was down in your face more, and your wheelchair was nowhere to be found as I pleased you." As she spoke, she began to give him a lap dance. "Your glare softened slightly as I took more of you, and your arms wrapped around me to keep me from arching too far away from you. I stayed like that, perched in your lap, for hours."

"I wouldn't have touched you until you reached legal age." Masato's voice was low and husky as he snapped a bit.

“Hmm, I know.” She hummed as she leant down by his ear and kissed a path up his neck. “And I would happily perch in your lap even if you were still unwell and stuck in your wheelchair. Masato, you don’t get it. Feelings and attraction are illogical. I’m just saying that your health could fail tomorrow and I’d still be right here.”

Chapter 14

Chapter Text

Tōkyō, Nihon

june 13, 2007

She fought back a frown as she listened to the speeches being given, trying to once more ignore her mother, and turned away as she caught sight of the infuriating woman to duck into the crowd and slipped between two taller and broader men. She didn’t recognize either, but one was young, around Ryo’s age while the other looked to be maybe a tad bit older than Detective Date. Either way, she slipped off her heels and hid behind the two, ignoring the chuckles from the broader of the two.

“You hiding from an ex, darling?” The older of the two questioned and she shook her head no before remembering he couldn’t see her while she was tucked *behind* them.

“Avoiding my mother.” She answered and hummed as she lost sight of her mother and moved to stand next to the man. “She keeps trying to play matchmaker.”

“Ah. Are you spoken for?” The younger of the two men asked, and she hummed, tilting her head curiously to how on earth he’d think of that leap in logic. “You wear an expensive watch—a ‘sweetheart’ watch. It is just slightly vintage, as the style had been updated recently. And you wear a ring on her finger. Am I wrong?”

Blinking, she stared up at the tall man and tried to process all the information as the elder started chuckling. “Um... I have spoken for, but neither of these pieces were gifts from him. Um, I assume you’re a detective?”

“I am. My apologies—my name is Arai Hiroaki.” The man smiled slightly as he gave a bow, and she nodded slightly before turning to the other man standing between them.

“Adachi Koichi. Here as a security detail; I’m up from Yokohama.” Adachi introduced himself, and she nodded to him as well.

“Shiraishi Ran. Pleasure to meet you both.” She gave a slight, and shallow bow, to them both before shifting her weight to pull her heels back on. “Thank you both for letting me use you as human shields.”

“Ran-san.” She turned at the sound of the familiar voice and smiled at the sight of Ryo as he walked to her. They hadn’t come together, but he had told her to expect a surprise—and he was right to forewarn her; Ryo was dressed in a black and dark gray, pinstripe suit, with a black button down and a matching dark gray tie. His hair was still in the more proper style, but everything else was a near recreation of the outfit he’d worn on his birthday six years ago. “I was looking for you. May you both excuse us?”

She smiled softly as she followed after Ryo, not at all hearing a word from her shields as her heart raced at the sight of him dressed once more in the mix of matte and shiny blacks that had populated so many of her dreams and thoughts in her youth.

“Still hiding from your mother?” Ryo questioned, teasing and she chuckled as she fell into step beside him to take his offered arm as he led her through the crowd.

“Yes, but don’t worry. The only man I’m going home with tonight is you. Only you. Ever, Ryo.” She spoke it like a promise, and smiled at the dark look he got as he slowly began to process her sincerity. He still had problems with that; accepting her words as true sentiments and not platitudes. He was getting a bit better, but it was slow going.

“Well, I was wondering if you’d like to meet a young businessman that a few of your mother’s friends are now trying to introduce you to?” At his question she raised a brow and slowly stopped walking. Catching her look, he stopped and stepped to stand level with her before explaining in a soft whisper, “His name is Mine Yoshitaka, he is a year older than me, and I’m quite certain that he holds no interest in women. I was thinking you could save him?”

“Oh.” She blinked and nodded her head as they resumed walking, this time in the clear direction of a rather tall gentleman dressed in a very nice dark blue suit, with perfectly gelled back hair; the look on his face was flat, but pleasant, and yet the look on his eyes screamed for someone to mitigate whatever the old biddies around him were planning. “Interests?”

“Art, boxing, baseball. I’m not sure past that, however.” Ryo’s voice cut off from the soft quiet whisper to a more attention getting level as they stepped forward. “Ladies, may we interrupt? I was hoping to introduce Mine-san to Shiraishi-san; I thought perhaps her career in journalism would be of interest to our new friend?”

“Oh! Governor Aoki! Of course, of course.” One of the women, one that was also her neighbor, gushed and she kept the glare off her features as the women all disappeared.

“Governor Aoki.” Mine’s voice was a little low, melodic and a tad fast. The voice of a Chairman, or the man at the top of the food chain. His eyes had calmed as the women all left them alone, and she couldn’t resist the small smile as his broad shoulders relaxed. “It is a pleasure.”

“The pleasure is mine, Mine-san.” Ryo nodded, and moved to gesture towards her when one of his aides stepped to him and pulled him aside. “Ah, business calls. I trust you two can survive without me?”

“Annd... he’s off.” She giggled as she watched him be swallowed up in the crowd of police bigwigs, politicians and other CEOs. She normally would’ve preferred to stay close to him when a crowd got that big, but he’d specifically searched her out and then asked her to protect Mine-san, and so she would stay near the imposing and living Nihonjin Adonis. *No wonder those old biddies wouldn’t leave him alone.* “Breathe, Mine-san. I am not here to incessantly bat my eyelashes at you, Aoki-san simply thought we could both use the buffer. My mother won’t leave me be, and her friends won’t leave you alone. Win-win.”

“Ah, that makes sense.” Mine’s voice was very melodic, and she couldn’t resist the smile that wanted to steal over her face at the sound. If Ryo’s suspicions were correct, and the taller man did in fact ‘bat for the other team’, then she hoped whatever man found himself the object of that steely eyed gaze and beautiful voice knew how very lucky he was. “I must admit that this is a tad bit out of my league.”

“Socializing with this many people, old women trying to play matchmaker, or interacting with a woman that didn’t want to seduce you?” She smirked as her quip got him to smile a bit, just a small quirk of his lips, but it was enough. “All of the above?”

“Yes.” Mine nodded once, and she hummed as she looked him over. A part of her wanted to ask if he was yakuza, but in a room full of police that would not be wise... and, she didn’t exactly think he was—too green among the crowd. Perhaps one day he would be. “What do you go to university for?”

“What do you think of Mine-san?” Ryo questioned as she sat behind him on the bed and slowly undid his tie. They’d only recently gotten home, but despite not having been able to talk to him even once aside from him retrieving her to save the man in question, she’d had a good night talking with Mine.

“He’s smart, very hardworking and ambitious. Very serious, and very closed off. We talked about my schooling, career, how I met you. His company and work. He loves classical art, and owns several rare pieces. He enjoys boxing and is proficient in mixed martial arts.” She smirked as she tacked on one last bit to her list, “He’s also very handsome.”

“Hey!” Ryo turned as he slightly yelped, indignant over her comment and she couldn’t resist a round of giggles at the angry pout on his face. “You...”

“Ryo.” She sobered as she saw the dark and dejected look move over his face, and she frowned as she wrapped her arms around his shoulders to tug him to her. “I’m only playing. I’m sorry... I didn’t think, Masato.” She sighed as his arms wrapped around her waist and rubbed her hand up and down his back as he held her. *That was dumb. That was very **very** dumb.* “You know I’m only yours. Ever, Ryo.”

“I just...” She sighed, in complete understanding of his emotional scars, and began to card her fingers through his hair—only to wince and gasp as his arms squeezed around her sides and

her stomach disagreed with being squeezed so tightly. The pressure on it made her wince, and she couldn't suppress the squeak as she moved a hand to protectively rest over the small swell. "Ran?"

She frowned as Ryo sat up and his gaze traveled over her; his dark eyes narrowed as he focused on the swelling of her breasts, and then down to where her hand rested on her stomach. "Ryo..."

"You're pregnant." It wasn't a question, and at the dark but scared look in his eyes, she didn't comment and instead simply nodded in response. "Is it... mine?"

"Yes. Apparently taking antibiotics on the pill cancels out the pill." She offered that information up freely—that was the easy part of this mess. "What do you want to do?"

"I... you're so young. It may be a scandal. What if... what if the child has my old health issues?" Ryo's back was to her, but she could picture the look in his eyes. She'd once seen him terrified before, after all. "We could... there is abortion."

"I..." She frowned as the words escaped him. "Or adoption."

"You want to take the risk of a sickly child?" Ryo turned back to her, his eyes questioning, and she very slowly nodded. She wanted the child, she hadn't thought that she would, in the week or so since finding out but now putting it into words with him, she found her heart and that was leaning towards keeping the child.

"Come what may, I want this."

"We'll figure it out." Ryo's lips were on hers then, and she let out a moan as she kissed him back. As he lowered her down onto the bed, she tugged at his black shirt and smiled.

Chapter 15

Chapter Text

Hokkaido, Nihon

december 13, 2007

She coughed as her head broke through the snow, almost like breaking the surface of water after nearly drowning. Pulling herself up, she cursed as she held one hand to her throbbing temple as she tightly pressed her free hand to her stomach, checking for a pulse and sighing in relief as she could still feel the heartbeat of her daughter. If she survived this, heads *would* roll.

"Makimura-sama asked for the Dojima Lieutenants' heads on silver platters."

She coughed again as she pulled herself fully out of the snowbank. Let them think they had killed her and cleaned up whatever scandal they believed was about to befall them and topple the empire they'd built with dirty money. The next time they would see her, she'd be answering to her father's name: *Kiryu*.

Notes:

You will find that I use a lot of Japanese (Nihongo) terms, I do this for two reasons: (1) to study and (2) to add a bit of authenticity to the games, culture etc. I'm still learning, so if something seems off, give me data/source to study and I'll do better.

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1. [CryingCow](#) on Chapter 1 Thu 06 May 2021 01:01PM EDT



I like it Nyx!! <3 It's a good thing Ran knows a lot of cop things from her mom Marina that she manages to put into use here :D sad that she never got to give Ichiban's gift tho



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Aww. Yay, I'm glad you like it! Ran knows a lot of things, though using them to circumvent a crime being solved is not how Marina would prefer her child to use those skills. 😞

And yeah... eighteen years later he may eventually get the very late birthday present. 😞

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